

2-13-09

Legislative Activity

Things to watch:

(Schedules subject to change.)

Monday, Feb. 16

Kansas Senate: S.B. 25, Statewide Clean Indoor Air Law. Floor debate and possible preliminary vote.

Time: 2:30 p.m., Senate Chamber

Senate Public Health & Welfare Comm: Hearing on S.B. 173, allowing certain retired officers and employees to enroll in State Employee Health Plan.
Time: 1:30 p.m.
Statehouse, Room 136-N.

House Vision 2020: Discussion of health care delivery, Telemedicine.

Time: 1:30 p.m.
Room 711, Docking (Rescheduled from previous week.)

Saturday, Feb. 21

"Turnaround Day," Deadline for most bills to pass out of house of origin.

Stimulus Package Includes \$450 Million for Kansas Medicaid

Congressional negotiators reached agreement this week on a federal stimulus package that would include \$87 billion in additional Medicaid funding for states. The Kansas Health Policy Authority estimates that will result in about \$450 million in additional Medicaid funding for Kansas.

KHPA officials were in close contact with the Kansas congressional delegation, as well as other state Medicaid officials, throughout the process as the stimulus package was being negotiated. A major point of concern for KHPA was the amount of additional Medicaid funding some states would get to compensate for rapidly rising unemployment rates.

KHPA had urged Congress to pass a uniform, across-the-board increase in the federal matching rate. An amendment to that effect failed, 49-47. Both Sens. Sam Brownback (R) and Pat Roberts (R) of Kansas voted yes.

The final version calls for a 6.2 percentage point increase in the federal matching rate for Medicaid, with smaller unemployment-related increases than the original House bill called for.

More than 300,000 Kansans receive health care coverage through Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program. KHPA believes passage of the bill, coupled with earlier passage of a bill reauthorizing and expanding SCHIP, will help guarantee those programs continue to provide coverage to those vulnerable people during a time of historic economic uncertainty in Kansas. It will also provide significant fiscal relief for the state as lawmakers struggle to balance the state budget in the face of declining revenues.

Senate to Debate Clean Indoor Air Bill

The Kansas Senate is tentatively scheduled to debate the statewide Clean Indoor Air bill (S.B. 25) on Monday, Feb. 16.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. David Wysocki (R-Shawnee Mission) would prohibit smoking in virtually all indoor workplaces and public establishments, including bars and restaurants.

It is expected that several amendments will be offered to add exemptions to the bill. The Kansas Health Policy Authority strongly supports the bill in its current form and opposes adding additional exemptions.

KHPA Activities

Mark the Calendar

Tuesday, Feb. 17
KHPA Board Meeting:
The Kansas Health
Policy Authority
Board will meet at
the Capitol Plaza Ho-
tel, Shawnee A
Room, 17th & Topeka
Blvd., Topeka, Kan.
To review the
agenda, please visit
the [KHPA website](#).

Additional Information

Tobacco User Fee:
House Bill 2327 is
now the bill that in-
cludes KHPA's pro-
posal to increase to-
bacco user fees to
fund health initia-
tives in Kansas and
deter tobacco use.
The full text of the
bill can be viewed on
the Kansas [Legisla-
ture's website](#).

For additional discus-
sion about the to-
bacco user fee,
please see Page 9 of
the [KHPA's 2009
Health Reform Rec-
ommendations](#).

Budget Rescission Bill Exempts Medicaid from FY 2009 Cuts

The Kansas Medicaid program would be exempt from direct budget cuts under a bill that passed out of the legislature this week and is now on its way to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

The bill calls for an across-the-board 1.25 percent cut in state general fund spending for most agencies and programs. But it exempts the Medicaid "caseloads," the line item that includes the direct cost of paying Medicaid claims.

KHPA officials say that means there will be no need to cut services for benefici-aries or reimbursement rates for providers. The agency would be required to cut 1.25 percent from other parts of its budget, which includes contractual ser-vices, administrative expenses and payroll.

KHPA estimates those cuts would amount to about \$750,000. That's in addition to the 3-percent cuts that were included in Gov. Sebelius' proposed budget for this year.

The impact of the cuts may be partially offset with new funding that is ex-pected to flow from the federal stimulus package. KHPA and administration of-ficials are still reviewing details of the federal plan to determine what restric-tions would apply to the use of those funds.

Compromise Reached on Mental Health Drug Management

The Kansas Health Policy Authority presented new language this week for a bill aimed at more effective management of mental health prescription drugs in the Kansas Medicaid program and State Children's Health Insurance Pro-gram (SCHIP).

The new language represents a compromise between agency staff who recom-mended stronger controls on mental health prescriptions due to safety and cost concerns, and mental health advocacy groups concerned about assuring continued access to medications for mental health patients.

Under the new language of Senate Bill 166, KHPA would be allowed to safety controls for mental health prescriptions for adolescents and children enrolled in Medicaid and SCHIP. It would not allow the agency to adopt cost control measures such as a "Preferred Drug List." It would also leave in place existing law that prohibits regulation or control of mental health prescriptions for adults in Medicaid.

KHPA Pulse is a publication by the KHPA Communications Team distrib-uted weekly during the legislative session. If you have questions or comments, contact the Public Information Officer Peter Hancock at 785/296.5603 or peter.hancock@khpas.gov

